

SC428599

Registered provider: Courtyard Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care and support for up to five children who can no longer live at home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2022.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 22 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/09/2021	Full	Outstanding
04/09/2019	Full	Outstanding
02/10/2018	Full	Outstanding
21/11/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Three children spoke to the inspectors about their experience of living in the home and they said that they feel safe at this time. However, this has not been their experience throughout the last 12 months. One child said that they experienced bullying from the previous manager and some staff. This was referred to safeguarding professionals and appropriate action was taken. Children and staff agree that the home feels more relaxed and safer since the change of manager.

The home is clean and tidy with suitable space for the three children living there. Children have personalised their own bedrooms. Children say that they are sent to bed at 8pm, regardless of their age, and they cannot access the kitchen or other areas of the home after this time. Staff confirmed this. This does not support children to manage their time independently or provide children with a homely feel.

One child, who has now moved on from the home, reported in a document that they experienced racist comments by other children while living in the home. Managers and staff have failed to address this issue. There is no evidence that children were spoken with at this time. The same child asked if they could speak basic phrases, such as 'good morning', in their own language but was denied permission for this. It has been recorded as, 'It may be confusing for staff or children.' This does not support children to express or celebrate their own culture.

Staff seek regular feedback from children, but this is usually written on a form and handed directly to staff members. One child said that they do not feel able to be honest on the forms as staff will know who said what. Children have been given the option of an anonymous survey online. However, due to restrictions on some children's internet usage, staff would be able to determine which child reported the concerns online. While the anonymous survey is a step in the right direction, it does not yet meet the needs of the children to provide anonymous, honest feedback.

Children who are approaching 18 years of age are not given enough support to develop their independence skills. For example, most of the assessment of one child's independence skills finished in 2021 and there has been little evaluation on whether the child needs more support in attaining these skills. Further to this, the child does not have a clear transition plan.

Key-work sessions with children do not always have a clear purpose. Conversations between staff and children are recorded as key-work sessions. Generally, there is little evidence of focused work around issues such as healthy relationships, sexual health and behaviour. This means that opportunities to carry out meaningful work with children have been missed.

Staff provide good support for children with their education. Children's attendance at school has improved since moving into the home and staff advocate for children when they do not have a school placement. Children who are completing their learning in the home are supported with schoolwork by the staff. However, they would benefit from a structured educational timetable so that they know what they will be studying each day.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children are supported to move into the home in a planned way. However, the manager has not used the location risk assessment as part of her decision-making. This does not ensure that the area is safe for them to live in. In addition, the manager and staff are not aware of the local offer which sets out the support available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is a missed opportunity to access additional resources for children.

When children come to live at this home, they are taken through the complaints procedure to make sure that they know how to raise any concerns about their care. Although several children say that they are unsure about this process, they are confident that they could raise a concern with other professionals.

There have been safeguarding concerns raised by children. Most of these concerns have been appropriately managed by leaders and managers, who have taken immediate action to report the concerns and have followed all their own safeguarding procedures. However, there was a delay in one concern being raised with safeguarding professionals. The manager informed the relevant agencies when this was brought to her attention on the day of the inspection.

Staff have received additional training in safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures. However, several members of staff were not confident when they discussed their roles and responsibilities in protecting children with the inspectors. Therefore, the staff's retention of information and their understanding after training need to be periodically assessed to ensure that their learning is embedded into practice.

Children's risk assessments highlight all known risks that are recorded in the children's local authority documents. However, the guidance for staff to follow if an incident occurs is not individualised for each child. Similarly, children's support plans are not individualised to the child. Further to this, children are not asked about their views, wishes or feelings on how they would like to be supported by staff.

When children go missing from the home, staff search the local area and continually call children's mobile phones to try to find them. Return home interviews are carried out by an independent person. As a result, children have someone independent to talk to and can discuss any concerns they may have.

Children say that staff are calm and consistent in their approach to supporting them when they are upset or anxious. The manager and staff liaise with other professionals, such as the company's psychologist and the child and adolescent mental health services, to ensure that the children receive the most appropriate support for their emotional needs and well-being. As a result, the number of incidents when children harm themselves has significantly reduced due to the approach and support that they receive from staff.

Safe recruitment and health and safety practices at the home ensure that only the most suitable staff work there and that it is a safe place to live. Records show that children, staff and visitors are taken through the emergency evacuation procedure. Likewise, all visitors sign in and their identification is checked. This means that everyone is kept as safe as possible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Staff and children say that the atmosphere of the home has improved significantly since the new manager has been in post. Staff describe the home as 'an enjoyable place to work' and say that they have more opportunities for development now than when the previous manager was in post.

Staff have a range of life experiences and most of the staff have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3. New staff are at different stages of completing a similar childcare qualification. A clinical psychologist is employed for a day per week to support the children and staff. Staff said that they benefit from her expertise when discussing the children's needs and how best to support them.

Staff have regular supervision and team meetings. They receive regular training on topics that are relevant to the children placed, such as attachment, exploitation and boundaries. However, staff would benefit from more reflective practice which includes discussions around current research and practice to keep learning and development dynamic.

The manager has made some attempts to request missing paperwork from local authorities for the children's files. However, there is no evidence that essential documents, such as pathway plans, have been escalated with the local authority. This could lead to confusion for children around their plans and inconsistency in the provision of care.

Children's files are cumbersome because old information has not been archived. When new information, appointments or updated plans are received, the old information is not taken out of the file. This means that children and staff may not have the most relevant information to hand.

Several external professionals were spoken with as part of this inspection. They say that they have a positive working relationship with the manager and the staff in the

home. They say that they receive detailed updates which include the children's views, wishes and feelings.

The home's statement of purpose and development plan are up to date. However, the workforce plan needs to identify the timescales for supervision for all staff. Further to this, the manager's internal monitoring does not routinely look for trends and patterns in the children's documents. For example, the manager has designed some graphs that show how children's behaviour has improved or declined. However, the manager has not evaluated these to see if there is any connection to other things going on in a child's life, such as family time or school holidays. This means that this information is not used to inform staff's practice.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that missing documents are escalated quickly.</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult;</p>	26 November 2022

make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vi)(ix))	
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>protect and promote each child's welfare;</p> <p>treat each child with dignity and respect;</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;</p> <p>make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(iii)(iv)(ix))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that a child's cultural heritage is explored and that a child is encouraged to use their native language. Further to this, ensure that any discriminative or racial comments are addressed with other children living in the home.</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (Regulation 7 (1)(b)(c))</p>	26 November 2022

Specifically, ensure that children can contribute to their support plans.	
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the actions for staff to take are individual to the child and that children can share their views, wishes and feelings around the risks that they present.</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(c))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the location risk assessment is used when considering new referrals to the home.</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(e))</p>	26 November 2022

Specifically, ensure that the staff's understanding around safeguarding and whistle-blowing policies is checked regularly.	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(g)(i))</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(g)(ii))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that children's feedback forms or consultation are anonymous.</p>	26 November 2022
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p>	26 November 2022

<p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iii))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected;</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p>	<p>26 November 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p>	<p>26 November 2022</p>

provide for liaison and co-operation with any local authority which are, or may be, making a child protection enquiry in relation to a child accommodated in the home;

provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located;

provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about past abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the alleged abuse or neglect occurred;

provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response.
(Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))

Specifically, the manager should ensure that there is clear accountability of reporting an allegation when a child has left the home. Further to this, the manager must seek a response and an outcome when other professionals have been asked to take the lead on an allegation.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all children know how to access the complaints procedure. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that the workforce plan details the timescales for supervision of all staff working in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that managers and staff are aware of the local offer which sets out the support available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.4)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a clear education timetable in the home when a child is not in full-time education. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the quality of the recordings of key-work sessions are purposeful, evaluative and non-stigmatising, so that they are

helpful to a child. In particular, ensure that young people's files are in a good order. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- The registered person should monitor and review the children's documents, plans and graphs to identify any patterns or trends. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC428599

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Courtyard Care Limited

Registered provider address: 3 Siskin Drive, Middlemarch Business Park,
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Responsible individual: Gary Thompson

Registered manager: Kelly Delaney

Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Aislinn Cooper, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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